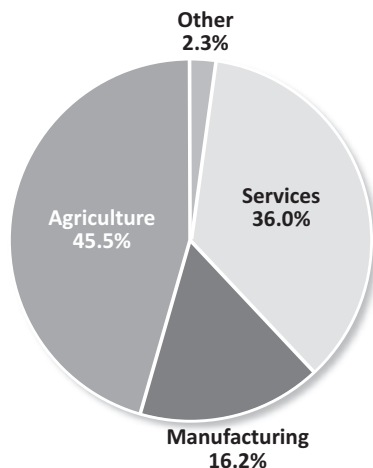


In 2012, Bangladesh made a moderate advancement in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government passed the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act, which criminalizes trafficking. The Government also approved the Child Labor Elimination National Plan of Action (NPA). Over the reporting period the Government began a new initiative to eliminate child labor from urban slums and in rural areas. However, legal protections regarding child labor are limited, and the capacity to enforce child labor laws remains weak. Children in Bangladesh continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in dangerous activities in agriculture and in domestic service.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	10.1 (3,717,540)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	81.2
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	6.8
Primary Completion Rate		Unavailable

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Sources:

Primary completion rate: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis from LFS Survey, 2005-2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Bangladesh are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in dangerous activities in agriculture and in



domestic service.(3-6) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(7, 8) In Bangladesh, they frequently work long hours, are exposed to extreme temperatures, and suffer high rates of injury from sharp tools.(4, 9) Children work in poultry farming and in drying fish, which exposes them to harmful chemicals, dangerous machines, and long hours of work in the hot sun.(5, 6, 10-12)

Children, mostly girls, work as domestic servants in private households in Bangladesh where they work long hours and are subject to discrimination and harassment, in addition to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.(5, 12-15)

Children are also involved in manufacturing, including in salt mining; recycling; dismantling and remanufacturing of metal structures; and the production of soap, matches, bricks, cigarettes, footwear, furniture, glass, jute, leather, and textiles.(5, 6, 12, 13, 16) While producing these goods, often in small workshops or homes, they face dangers that may include work with hazardous chemicals and sharp objects, cramped conditions with low lighting, long hours, poor hygiene conditions, operating heavy machinery, and carrying heavy loads.(6, 12)

Children collect and process shrimp, which has led to back injuries, repetitive strain, muscle inflammation, diarrhea, and infections.(5, 17) Children also work in the ship breaking sector, applying gas torches to cut iron into pieces and carrying dismantled ship parts into shipyards. Children lack the physical

Bangladesh

strength necessary for ship breaking and risk cuts, burns, and exposure to hazardous chemicals.(18, 19)

Children are also found working on the streets, garbage picking, vending, begging, and portering. These children are vulnerable to exploitation, such as selling or smuggling drugs.(5, 6, 12, 20)

Although information is limited, children reportedly work in hotels and restaurants, where they may face long working hours; in informal garment production, where they are exposed to loud noise, extreme temperatures, sharp tools, machinery, and dust; and fish drying, which they may perform under conditions of forced or indentured labor.(11, 12, 21-23) There is also limited evidence that children work in tea production, some for no compensation.(24)

Bangladeshi children are also exploited in the commercial sex industry; some children are trafficked internally and others across borders for sexual exploitation.(25) Children are also trafficked internally for domestic servitude and forced and bonded labor.(26) Boys and girls are exploited in illicit activities including smuggling and trading arms and drugs.(12, 27)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code establishes 14 as the minimum age for work and 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work, although it permits children ages 12 and 13 to perform light work with certain restrictions.(28) The Code also limits the hours children ages 14 to 18 can work.(5, 28) However, the Labor Code excludes many sectors of the economy in which children work, including small farms and domestic service.(28)

In 2012, the Government approved a list of hazardous work prohibited for children; however, the list is considered a draft until it receives formal approval by the Cabinet, and by the end of the reporting period, the Cabinet had not given this approval.(29, 30) The list contains 36 occupations such as ship breaking, leather manufacturing, construction, and work in automobile workshops.(5, 31)

The Labor Code also prohibits parents or guardians from making employment agreements on behalf their children, and the Penal Code prohibits forced labor.(5, 28) Those who violate the Penal Code are subject to a fine or imprisonment of up to 1 year, which may not serve to deter the crime.(12, 28)

In February 2012, the Parliament approved a national anti-trafficking law, the Human Trafficking Deterrence and

Suppression Act of 2012, which expands the definition of trafficking to include labor trafficking, includes protections for men and boys, and makes trafficking a capital offense with a maximum sentence of the death penalty.(29, 30) The Penal Code and the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933 criminalize the prostitution of girls under age 18.(5, 32)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	No
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	No
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	10
	Free Public Education	Yes

In February 2013, the Cabinet approved the Children's Act; however, as of the end of the reporting period, the Act still awaited Parliamentary approval.(33) Once enacted, the Act will change Bangladesh's legal definition of a child as a person under the age of 14 to one under the age of 18, and will criminalize any kind of cruelty inflicted on children while they are working in both the formal and informal sectors. In addition, the Act will prescribe punishments for using or exploiting children in begging; in brothels; and in carrying drugs, arms, or other illegal commodities.(5)

Bangladesh has only voluntary military service. While there is no legislation establishing a minimum age for voluntary military recruitment, each branch has designated its own minimum age; the Air Force sets its enlistment age at 16 years, with a minimum age of 18 to serve in combat roles.(5, 34)

Although the law establishes that education is free and compulsory in Bangladesh, the costs of teacher fees, books, and uniforms are prohibitive for many families.(5, 12) The

2010 Education Policy raised the age of compulsory education from grades five to eight; however, until the law is amended to reflect the new compulsory education age, the policy is not enforceable.(5, 9, 35)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government of Bangladesh operates a Child Labor Unit (CLU) in the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) to coordinate and supervise programs to counter child labor.(12, 36) In collaboration with partner ministries and stakeholders, the CLU also monitors child labor elimination program activities and oversees the collection and storage of data in the Child Labor Monitoring Information System.(36, 37)

The Office of the Chief Inspector of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments under the MOLE is responsible for enforcing labor laws, including child labor provisions. The MOLE employed 183 labor inspectors nationwide during the reporting period.(5, 30, 35) Working from one of 31 offices located across the country, each inspector conducts between five and 100 inspections monthly.(5) There are five inspection teams dedicated to monitoring labor violations in the shrimp sector, and specialized monitoring teams that regularly inspect ready-made garment factories.(5, 35, 36)

The Government did not report the number of investigations conducted, nor any violations or penalties imposed during the reporting period, but has indicated that it does not have sufficient inspectors to effectively identify all cases of child labor.(5, 30) Under the MOLE's Child Labor NPA, the National Child Labor Welfare Council is charged with monitoring child labor at the district and *upazilla* (sub-district) levels.(5, 30, 38)

In December 2012, the Government approved Child Protection Networks at the district and *upazilla* level. These networks are mandated to respond to a broad spectrum of violations against children, including child labor, and to monitor interventions and develop referral mechanisms.(5)

The MOHA is the lead agency designated to enforce the country's forced labor and anti-trafficking laws, including child trafficking.(23, 37) It operates an anti-trafficking police unit in Dhaka comprised of 12 police officers charged with investigating all forms of trafficking and provides anti-trafficking training to police officers and other public officials.(5) MOHA also chairs an inter-ministerial anti-

trafficking committee that oversees and monitors national and district level efforts to combat human trafficking.(5, 23, 26) The total number of inspections carried out is unknown. The Government reported 36 new cases of child trafficking over the reporting period involving 95 traffickers, 24 of whom were arrested by the police and handed over to the judicial system.(30) However, only two of these cases ended in convictions.(30)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Child Labor Elimination Policy (NCLEP) (2010) aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2015.(35, 39) The NCLEP serves as a guide to initiate sustainable interventions that will remove children from the worst forms of child labor and provide them viable alternatives to work.(30) The Child Labor NPA lays out the NCLEP's implementation strategy, including the mobilization of resources and coordination of efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.(5, 30) The proposed budget for implementation of the Child Labor NPA is \$93 million over a 4-year period (2012-2016).(5, 30) The MOLE oversees Child Labor NPA committees at the national, district, and *upazilla* levels.(5)

Child labor is incorporated into a number of Government policies and planning documents, including the Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-2015), the National Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking (2012-2014), the National Labor Policy, the National Education Policy (2010), the National Plan of Action for Education for All (2003-2015), the National Skills Development Policy (2011), and the National Policy for Children (2011).(29, 30, 35, 37, 40)

During the reporting period, the MOLE began work on the Domestic Workers' Protection and Welfare Policy, designed to help protect the rights of child domestic workers.(30)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2012, Bangladesh participated in the USDOL-funded 4-year Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues, which is active in approximately 40 countries. In Bangladesh the project aims to improve the evidence base on child labor and forced labor through data collection and research.(41)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare collaborated with UNICEF on a new initiative to eliminate

Bangladesh

child labor from urban slums and in rural areas.(5) The program's child-focused social protection approach includes the provision of conditional cash transfers and empowerment training; outreach and referral; and social protection services for targeted beneficiaries. The program will reach 500,000 children and 30,000 adolescents between 2012 and 2016.(5, 30)

Also during the reporting period, the Government continued to implement Phase III of the Eradication of Hazardous Child Labor project (2011-2013), which targets 50,000 children between the ages of 10 and 14 for withdrawal from hazardous labor through non-formal education and skills development training.(35, 42) Phases I and II succeeded in withdrawing 50,000 children from child labor.(5)

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education continued to implement the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children project. Between 2004 and 2012, the project provided an average of 3.4 years of non-formal education to 166,000 out-of-school children between the ages of 10 and 14 in urban areas.(30)

The Government continued to participate in a USAID-funded project that builds capacity of the police to identify and prosecute traffickers, expand public awareness on trafficking,

and provide services to trafficking victims. Additionally, the Government supported nine shelters for women and children who have experienced violence, including trafficking, and is participating in a child helpline service funded by the Danish International Development Agency.(5, 30, 43)

During the reporting period, the Government continued to manage two anti-trafficking projects, namely the Community Based Working Child Protection Project and the Actions for Combating Trafficking-in-Persons. These programs aim to combat human trafficking, enhance preventive and protective measures, improve victim care, and strengthen the Government's capacity to prosecute trafficking-related crimes.(30, 36, 44)

The Employment Generation Program for the Poorest, Bangladesh's largest social safety net program, provides short-term employment for the rural poor.(45, 46) The Vulnerable Group Development Program is Bangladesh's other large social safety net initiative. It provides vulnerable families with food assistance and training in alternative income-generating opportunities.(30, 47, 48) In 2012, the Government continued to pilot a study to assess the feasibility of creating a national population database that would improve access to the country's social safety net programs.(49)

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Bangladesh:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Amend the Labor Code to protect the large numbers of children working in small-scale agriculture, family enterprises, and domestic work.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Enact laws to ensure protections for child domestic workers.	2012
	Amend the law to reflect the policy that education is compulsory through grade eight.	2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors to better enforce child labor laws and protect against exploitative child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Publish statistics on the number of child labor inspections conducted and the prosecutions and convictions that ensued.	2012
Social Programs	Assess the impact that existing social safety net programs may have on reducing child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012

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